

THE COURIER

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The Robinson House as it looked at the turn of the century when it was owned by William and Agnes Straw. Notice the hitching post, which was later moved to the rear of the building, but has now been returned to the front lawn, very near its original location. Photo courtesy of Barbara Hastings Honkala.

THE O'NEIL ROBINSON HOUSE

A Brief Architectural Overview

by Randall H. Bennett

(Editor's Note: The following remarks were delivered at the opening of Robinson House to the public 3 June 1999. They have been edited slightly for inclusion in this issue.)

"The strength of a nation lies in the homes of its people," said Abraham Lincoln. Even in today's world of rapidly changing technology, we can still identify with that phrase. The daily activities that go on within the wall of what we call "home" is central to all our lives, and thus the history of our houses can tell us much about who we once were and who we are today. In addition, a home's setting, those human modifications made to land around it, is also a fundamental part of its identity. Such is the case of the O'Neil Robinson House, the Bethel Historical Society's recent acquisition on Broad Street next to the headquarters since 1974, the Dr. Moses Mason House. Owned by a sequence of five families and then for many years by the Bethel Inn, this impressive structure, a major landmark in Bethel's National Register Historic District, now joins the Mason House as part of the Bethel Historical Society's "Regional History Center."

The origins of the Robinson House lie in a period of the town's history when this village was in its infancy as a local hub of social, commercial, and industrial activity. Centered around Eleazer Twitchell's grist and saw mills at the foot of what is now called Mill Hill, this village, long known as "Bethel Hill," boasted a tavern and a store at the time Dr. Moses Mason began his Federal style house in

1813, although the Common would not become town property and be cleared of rocks and trees until the mid-1820s.

My investigation into the Robinson House's architectural past has led me to many sources of information, including old newspapers, maps, photographs, diaries, and legal documents. Of course, the Robinson House itself has yielded much information as I've grown familiar with its many rooms, which come to a total of twenty one if one doesn't include the hallways or the seventeen bathrooms. But some of the most useful clues to this house's past have come from two nearby buildings, the Dr. Moses Mason House and the Hastings Homestead, the latter of which was built within a year or two of this structure. We should also keep in mind that the Mason and Hastings houses were originally occupied by sisters of O'Neil Robinson's wife, Betsey Hilton Straw. Because of their very similar floor plans and architectural details, which stem from prevailing building patterns of the early 19th century, but also because of the close kinship between the Mason, Robinson, and Hastings families, a better understanding of this structure's history has been possible by closely comparing all three buildings.

Perhaps the best way for us to form a mental picture of the Robinson House as it originally appeared would be to imagine a slightly larger Dr. Mason House standing in its place. This notion is useful when one realizes that the present Robinson House, which is very large, actually encases a smaller two-and-a-story Federal style that shares the front wall and about two-thirds of the gable-end walls in that section of the house nearest Broad Street. This

(continued on page 5)



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

As of 20 June 1999, over \$350,000 has been raised from cash, stock, gifts, pledges, grants, and challenges from over 200 donors.

Corporate Gifts

Northeast Bank \$25,000
Exxon Corporation \$1000

Foundation Grants

Betterment Fund \$75,000 (Challenge)
Bingham Trust \$10,000
Davis Family Foundation \$25,000
Simmons Foundation \$7,500

Room Naming Opportunities

(\$25,000 or more)
Robert and Janet Spidell, Anaheim, CA
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(Capital Campaign)

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(Donors of \$999 in honor of the Society's occupancy of the Foster-Straw House in 1999)

Stanley R. Howe, Bethel

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(Donors of \$500 to \$998)

Anonymous (2)
Allan and Mary Alice Hastings Bancroft, Paris
Barbara H. Brown, South Paris
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Friends of the Robinson House

(Donors of up to \$499)

Robert Albota, Ottawa, Ontario; Esther Anderson, Brockton, MA; Ernest and Alberta Angevine, Bethel; Al and Mary Alice Bancroft, Paris Hill; Bradley and Judith Barker, Bethel; Jean Barker, Delray Beach, FL; John and Mary Beth Bayerlein, Bethel; D.A. Bean Enterprises, Bethel; Bessie Bennett, Bethel; Randall H. Bennett, Bethel; Roberta D. Bordanaro, Granby, CT; A.W. and Florine Bowden, Bethel; Caroline Brown, Colorado Spring, CO; Norma Buck, Oxford; Donald and Mary Calderwood, Mesa, AZ; Cathy Canavan, Cool, CA; Roberta Chandler, Lovell; Ethel Chapman, West Bethel; Rosalind Chapman, Bethel; Donald M. Christie, Jr., M.D., Poughkeepsie, NY; Norman and Sylvia Clanton, Bethel; Stanley Coolidge, Oxford; Allen and Jacquelyn Cressey, Chelmsford, MA; Eva Conroy, Auburn; Richard and Carole Duplessis, Bethel; Katheryn Eames, Cape Elizabeth; Robert and Mary Eichel Raymond Fales, Waitsfield, VT; Jane Fife, Salt Lake City, Utah; John and Julia Fox, West Newton, MA; Allan Fraser, Bethel; Doris Fraser, Bethel; George and Virginia Gamble, Bethel; Marion Gates, Ann Arbor, MI; Gordon and Mary Gillies, Hebron; Wilma Gorman, Bethel; Anne Grasso, Providence, RI; Rupert and Suzanne Grover, Norway; Carolyn and Tom Harrison, Portland; Michael and Leslie Hathaway, Conway, NH; Florence Hastings, Bethel; Robert W. and Betty Ann Hastings, Bethel; Clayton and Helen Heath, Norway; Pamela S. Heydon, Wilton, CT; Scott Heydon, Shaker Heights, OH; Elizabeth Hines, Brooklin; Ruth Holmes, Bryant Pond; Adolf U. Honkala, Midlothian, VA; Kathy McLeod Hooke, Bethel; Vernon Ingraham, Wareham, MA; Charlotte K. Johnson, Westford, MA; Ardith A. Kelly, Salinas, CA; Earlon and Mary Keniston, Bethel; Lois Kilroy, Bethel; John Kubach, Bethel; Daisy LeClair, Bethel; Louise Lincoln, Bethel; James Locke, Topeka,

(Capital Campaign)

KS; Elizabeth Lord, Bethel; Michael Lovejoy, Norway; M/M Peter Lunder/The Lunder Foundation, Waterville; James and Ethel Mann, Lunenburg, MA; Mary March, Bridgton; Nancy H. Mercer, Bethel; Leonard E. and Renee Minsky Charitable Trust, Bangor; Joann C. Mooney, London, UK; David and Ann Morton, Hanover; Marvin and Tineka Ouwinga, Bethel; Richard and Wendy Penley, Bethel; Lillian Perkins, Bethel; Betty Barlow Prescott, Bangor; Eleanor Pugliese, Bethel; Dr. David Richards, Skowhegan; Beatrice Ritter, Torrington, CT; John and Lisa Robbins, Richmond; Dr. Ned Robertson, Cleveland Heights, OH; Joanne Thurston Peabody Stewart, Portland; Persis Suddeth, Bowie, MD; Bertha Stevens, Bethel; Don and Peggy Tobin, Bandera, TX; Mary Valentine, Bethel; Mary Wheeler, Bethel; Elizabeth Delano Whiteman, Philadelphia, PA; Ruth Wight, Bethel; Willard and Sylvia Wight, Newry; Eleanor Wilson, Bryant Pond.

ROBINSON HOUSE

In May 1998, the Society acquired the historic Robinson House for operations as an addition to its facilities. Named for the original owner of the house, O'Neil Robinson (1797-1867) and adjacent to the headquarters for the last twenty five years, the Dr. Moses Mason House, the building would then be known as the Robinson House. Once renovations are completed, critically needed space for exhibits, expanded museum shop and craft operations, more adequate research room and collection storage as well as an education room for all ages would be among the results of this expansion. This project also includes an endowment phase, which would also allow the Society to expand its focus to become a truly northern New England institution and establish its Regional History Center with programming, conferences, publications, exhibits, lectures, etc. relating to this region. Contributions are welcomed to make all this happen and may be made in a number of ways through cash, securities, stock, etc. For further information, please call the Society at (207) 824-2908 or (800) 824-2910 or write to P.O. Box 12, Bethel, ME 04217-0012 or e-mail (history@bdc.bethel.me.us).

JOIN THOSE LISTED ABOVE IN HELPING TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE 21st CENTURY! PLEASE SEND YOUR TAX DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION NOW!

BOOK REVIEW

The Civil War Journals of John Mead Gould 1861-1866. Edited by William B. Jordan, Jr. (Baltimore, MD: Butternut & Blue, 1997. 564 pps. illus. index. Cloth. \$50.)

William B. Jordan, Jr. has performed an outstanding service to those interested in Maine's role in the Civil War with his editorship of the wartime journals of John Mead Gould, born in Portland in 1839 and educated at Gould Academy in Bethel. While a student at the Academy, Gould began his diarykeeping and continued it until November 5, 1929, just prior to his death on New Year's Day 1930.

Enlisting in 1861 with the 1st Maine Infantry, Gould moved to the 10th Maine when that enlistment expired.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

One of the pleasant surprises of the spring and early summer was seeing how much our staff and volunteers have been able to do with the Robinson House for its interim operation prior to the time when sufficient funds are available to start the major renovations described in our recent brochure. Several rooms in the front part of the building--the older part--are being put to good use as a result of a lot of hard work and only a modest cost.

First and foremost is a spacious and attractive museum shop, with many new sale items. Although its decorative touches and artifacts provide an "old fashioned atmosphere," it offers visitors the modern convenience of credit cards. An exhibit room near the front entrance features panels on the history of the Robinson House and biographical data on its occupants since its construction in 1821 with newly donated display cases containing artifacts connected with their lives. Two second-floor rooms have been "spruced up" in anticipation of future exhibits.

The front downstairs hallway, which displays literature on other Northern New England historical sites and exhibits leads to a room serving as a lobby and gathering area, and a sunroom used for meetings and group activities such as quilting. The space above the gathering room is our capital campaign room for mailings and houses the committee's files and materials. Two large, well-lit rooms on the third floor are being used as the executive director's office and the office secretary's and bookkeeper's office.

Last but not least is the long open side porch, put into use "as is." Protected from showers, and overlooking the sizeable green space of the Society's property, it has proved to be most enjoyable spot for a variety of warm-weather events.

Please pay us a visit and see all this for yourself!

Walter Hatch

During 1862, Gould's regiment was stationed at Relay House, Harper's Ferry and Winchester, participating in the battles of Cedar Mountain and Antietam. After a brief respite from the war, Gould enlisted in the 29th Maine. Here he saw action in New Orleans and the Red River Campaign. Later the 29th was attached to Sheridan's army. Gould participated in and described the fighting at Winchester, Fisher's Hill and Cedar Creek among other engagements.

With the end of the war, Gould and the 29th Maine performed occupation duty in South Carolina. Here his diary records the early stages of the reconstruction era.

During the war years, the diary was written on sheets of blue onionskin. When Gould had completed several pages, he would send them by mail to his friend from Gould Academy days, Edward Sylvester Morse, who held them until his return from the war. None were ever lost and Gould had them bound in leather volumes, which survive to this day.

Gould used these diaries to publish his history of the 1st, 10th, and 29th Maine Regiment in 1871. In 1877, he

(continued on page 6)

MUSEUM SHOP CATALOG

Since the inventory of the newly enlarged Museum Shop has grown so large, it is not possible to list the entire inventory as was the case in the past. Those wishing a free catalog with listings of books, maps, genealogical charts, and numerous gift items offered in the Museum Shop should write the Society at P.O. Box 12, Bethel, ME 04217-0012 or call (207) 824-2908 or (800) 824-2910.

THE BETHEL SOLDIERS OF '61

From the pages of the OXFORD ADVERTISER, 5 November 1886, compiled by Judge C.F. Whitman of Norway

About the first of October 1862, the 121st New York regiment was brigaded with the 5th Maine, with these brave and gallant men from the Empire State, they shared the fatigues and perils, incidents to a soldier's life through the remaining period of their service. No soldiers ever camped more amicably together or thought more of each other. They were brothers in all that word implies and patriots fighting together to uphold the integrity of our government and the perpetuity of free institutions. Nearly a quarter of a century has passed away since they were mustered out of the service--and though they were together but a short period of time comparatively, yet men in such situations live a life-time in a few months--but there are none today so honored, respected and loved by the soldiers of the 5th Maine regiment as the gallant "onesters," from New York. We shall have occasion to speak of them and of their deeds of valor, since on the march, in the attack of the enemy or the charge upon his works, they were there with the "5th Maine on the right."

Early in November rumors reached the camp that Gen. McClellan for the second time was to be removed from the command of the army. The soldiers could hardly credit it, but on the tenth he rode through the various camps, and bade farewell to his troops, who had trusted and loved him as no other commander. Tears coursed down the cheeks of men who had faced without a tremor the enemy's cannon upon many a hard fought field. Everywhere it was the same. The following is the general's farewell address: Headquarters Army of the Potomac, Camp near Rectortown, Va., Nov. 7. Officers and soldiers of the Army of the Potomac--An order of the President devolves upon Major General Burnside the command of the army. In parting from you, I cannot express the love and gratitude I bear to you. As an Army you have grown up under my care. In you I have never found doubt or coldness. The battles you have fought under my command will proudly live in our national history. The glory you have achieved, our mutual perils, our fatigues, the graves of our comrades fallen in battle and by disease, the broken forms of those whom wounds and sickness have disabled--the strongest associations which can exist among men--unite us still by an insoluble tie. We shall ever be comrades in supporting the constitution of our country and the rationality of its people. (signed) Geo. B. McClellan, Maj. General, U.S. Army.

The regiment struck tents on the 16th and in two or three days marched to the vicinity of Acquia Creek, only a short distance from the heights of Fredericksburg, which at that time might have been easily taken and held, but

which afterwards cost us some seventeen thousand men in "the bloody blunder" of attempting to carry them. The delay at Acquia Creek gave Lee an advantage of twenty four hours which he improved in occupying and fortifying the hills overlooking the valley of the Rappahannock, and the Federal army beginning to gather on the other side.

On the 10th of December the 5th Maine was on the march for Fredericksburg. It only moved toward the front about three miles and the next instance when it had resumed its march, the boom of cannon gave notice of the opening of the battle. Arriving within a mile of the river for the contest, the regiment halted and made ready for the contest, which all believed was close at hand.

Attempts were made through the forenoon to lay pontoon bridges across the river, on which our troops could pass to the other side. The enemy, however, was too vigilant, but in the afternoon our artillery was placed in position to bombard the city.

The opening fire was grand and terrible. A long line of guns at a given signal vomited forth shot and shell into every nook and corner of the city and out of that doomed place flew the rebel troops on the run. The earth trembled and shook as if moved by an internal convulsion. Dwellings disappeared in a twinkling, large brick blocks were shattered and the storm of the fire and iron hail, sweeping over the city spread death and desolation everywhere. In one short hour the place was in ruins.

Under cover of the fire from our guns, the engineers constructed three bridges, and over them our troops began to cross. At five o'clock a staff officer rode up with the order for the 5th Maine to march over the river. When it arrived at the bridge, it found the troops which had gone over recrossing and the order to advance farther was countermanded. Early the following morning, it crossed the river without molestation and was formed into line. Now let Col. Edwards describe what followed: "It was quite late in the afternoon when we received the first shot from the enemy's batteries. It passed a few feet from my head. We held the center and were in the advance. The shades of night soon closed in upon us with both armies facing each other but with nothing accomplished. Saturday morning at early dawn, the battle opened on both right and left and at nine o'clock the fight had become general all along the line. It was one of the worst days I have ever experienced. I saw guns dismounted, caissons blown up, men torn to pieces and wounded in every conceivable shape, and in fact every horrible thing taking place in battle. It was a terrible day and one I can never forget. Night came at last with the two armies on about the same ground they occupied in the morning. Just at the close of twilight I witnessed Sumner's grand charge. He drove the Rebels before him like a flock of sheep and gained a position on a little hill covered with the earth works of the enemy. It was one of the grandest sights I have ever beheld. Thousands of muskets blazed and our men shouted as the Rebels flew in every direction. The enemy rallied in his earth works and soon our troops had to fall back. It causes my heart to ache to write this. Through a terrible storm of grape and canister and small shots, our brave fellows had gone up that hill. Thousands fell as they advanced and were trodden under foot as the survivors retreated."

The regiment had met with no loss and as soon as it was dark it threw up breast works which the soldiers called Fort Edwards. The next day there was very little fighting and

the two armies faced each other for several days when seeing the hopelessness and helplessness of their position in the face of the heights bristling with Rebel cannon, manned and supported by Lee's veterans, Burnside quietly withdrew and recrossed the river. A general feeling of indignation at this disaster was felt in the army and throughout the country. Col. Edwards was aroused and angered as he had never been before. No wonder he gave vent to his feelings in the following manner: "I for one am sick of the way the thing is managed. I tell you there is something wrong at the helm. I do not wish to judge wrongfully but the blame rests upon the powers at Washington. Will every penny sheet throughout the north ask 'Why don't the army move?' What do those who have relatives and friends in the army think of a winter campaign where soldiers chill and freeze to death in a single night? Five from one regiment in our division were found in the icy hands of death as the guard went to relieve them one morning. This great disaster is enough to sicken the heart of the brave. I must stop or I shall say too much. You will call me a traitor to my country and some will say I have changed my politics. Neither is true. I am the same I have always been, but I can see a fault in my party as quick as in the other."

The treatment of the wounded was inhuman. As I lay on the field through the long dreary nights till we recrossed the river, I could hear the groans and wails of the wounded and dying. They were beyond our reach between the two armies. I think my heart is as stout and strong as most of the people, but I could not help or keep back the rising in my throat and many tears trickled down my cheeks. Such nights I never knew before and I pray I may never know again. Those of our wounded who could be reached were put into carts, ambulances, and anything on hand and taken over the river. Many of them were carted to first one place and then another till they were worn out. Often something would be wrong or some red tape arrangement interfered with. This red tape business and the drunken surgeons have killed as many as have fallen in battle. Col. Hatch of the 4th N.J. regiment, one of the finest men I ever knew, was one of the unfortunate ones who were carted here and there till a second hemorrhage set in and he died from his wounds. Hundreds of such cases have occurred, but I am sick of relating them."

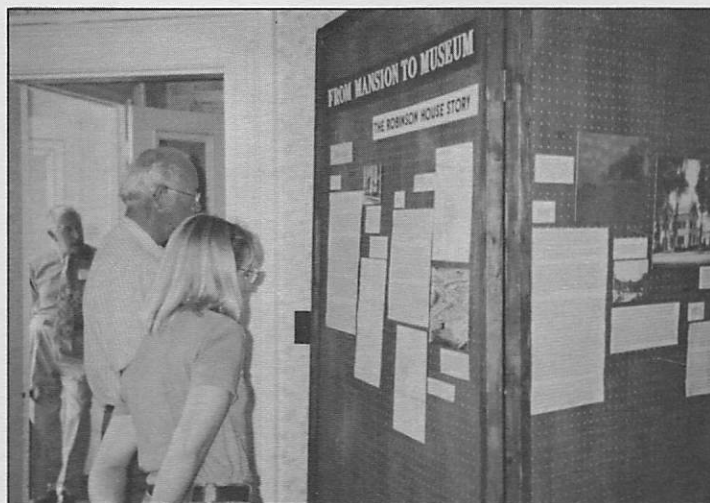
The 5th Maine were fortunate in suffering no loss during the battle of Fredericksburg and after it had recrossed the river it went into winter headquarters some four miles away at a place called Oak Church.

(to be continued in the next issue)

(Robinson House, continued from page 1)

"house-within-a-house" concept is explained further within the exhibit that opens tonight in the front room of the house. With its sidelighted front door capped with a wooden fan, the Robinson House was almost certainly begun in 1821, the same year O'Neil Watson Robinson, a native of Chatham, NH, purchased from Jacob Ellingwood a tract of land on the east side of the Common running north to present-day Main Street. Licensed that same year to sell "spirited liquors," Robinson also built himself a store of two-and-a-half stories on the present site of the Bethel Library.

If one stands near the Library today and looks back at this building, it's still possible to see the old house inside the present one. The original granite foundation on the gable end walls, running twenty feet back from the Broad



Visitors view the special exhibit "From Mansion to Museum: The Robinson House Story" at the opening on June 3.

Street corner, is lighter than that added sixty years later when the house was enlarged to today's proportions. In addition, if one compares the window spacing on both front gable-end walls, he or she quickly notes that the windows to each side of the chimney on the Library side are much closer to Broad Street (and are therefore in their original location) than those on the side facing the Dr. Mason House, where the windows are placed further back and better balanced. Since the present right-of-way to the Bethel Inn's Conference Center was originally this house's private driveway leading into a large connected barn, it's easy to see why more was done to improve the Mason House side. One's effort to imagine the configuration of the old house from the library side will also be eased if it is kept in mind that the second floor round window and larger window below it on that side were not added until well into this century. And it goes without saying that the roof above the front section of this structure is not the original, but was added when the house was enlarged. In its pitch and overall size, the Federal style Robinson House roof would have closely matched that on the Mason House, including its so-called "raking eaves," which were typically flush with the gable-end walls on area houses built before the 1830s.

One hundred and seventy eight years after it was begun, the Robinson House retains several interesting interior features from its earliest days. Until recently, it was thought that the house dated from around the Civil War, based on its many Victorian architectural features and a record suggesting that the original house had been destroyed by fire. However, when I finally gained access to the upstairs front bedrooms soon after the Society assumed ownership last year, I found myself stepping back into the 1820s as I viewed Federal style window moldings, doors, and chair-rails that nearly matched those in the Mason and Hastings houses. Fortunately, later owners of the Robinson House did not bother to update interior spaces that few visitors would see, focusing their attention instead on the downstairs front rooms and entry hall.

Perhaps the most interesting interior feature to have survived from the earliest days of this house is the Federal style fireplace mantle in this room, which would originally have been Betsey Robinson's winter kitchen. However, this mantle, which displays diamond-shaped inserts that match those on a mantle in the Hastings House front par-

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again put his diarykeeping to good use in publishing another book, *How to Camp Out. Hints for Camping and Walking*.

His only formal education was at Gould Academy. He was associated with the National Traders' Bank in Portland all his working life.

Gould married a Bethel woman, Amelia J. Twitchell, daughter of Alphin and Roxanna Twitchell, cousins of Dr. Moses Mason whose portraits now hang in the Society's period house museum. Gould's daughter Annie, a missionary, was killed during the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900. Gould and his family are buried in Bethel's Riverside Cemetery.

As is the case with most good diarists, Gould was insatiably curious about everything. He records in detail battles, men, and impressions of what he observed. Little escaped his attention.

From a modern perspective, Gould was not without his flaws. He was a strong Calvinist with rigid beliefs about the superiority of Anglo Saxon civilization. He viewed blacks and foreigners with contempt. He had actually been involved in nativist agitation until the election of Abraham Lincoln brought him to the Republican party where he remained for the rest of his days.

Throughout his life, he worked hard to improve the lot of veterans within the Grand Army of the Republic. He resigned from the Military Order of the Loyal Legion, a veteran's organization for Union officers, due to its partiality for whiskey and cigars. Gould was a firm teetotaler as his diary often reveals.

Much credit is due to William Jordan for his fine editorial work, to Nicholas Picerno for use of his photographs, and Janet and Bedford Hayes, owners of the Civil War diaries, for allowing them to be shared with all those interested in this remarkable era. SRH

MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND PLAN TO BE IN BETHEL FOR THE ARRIVAL OF THE YEAR 2000 ON DECEMBER 31! SEE HOW YOU CAN HELP ON PAGE 12.

IN MEMORIAM

Died, 27 September 1998, Donald M. Christie, Sr., Gray, Life Member

Died, 18 January 1999, John M. Nowlin, Newry, Senior Member

Died, 23 January 1999, Ann P. Morris, Grants Pass, OR, Senior Member

Died, 12 February 1999, Franklin S. Chapman, Bethel, Sustaining Member

Died, 9 March 1999, Marjorie Farwell Anderson, Bath, Life Member

Died, 26 April 1999, Gerald M. Kimball, Gray, Life Member

Died, 16 June 1999, Elizabeth M. Bailey, Bethel, Senior Member



Justin Gilbert

MEMBER PROFILE

Justin Gilbert is the Society's youngest life member. Born in 1979, the son of Ronald and Pauline Gilbert, he attended local schools and graduated from Telstar Regional High School in 1997. At Telstar, he was active in track and golf. He also was involved in a number of political campaigns. He has attended Horry-Georgetown College, Myrtle Beach, SC, studying hotel management for the past two years and plans to spend the summer working in a hotel in Jackson, NH.

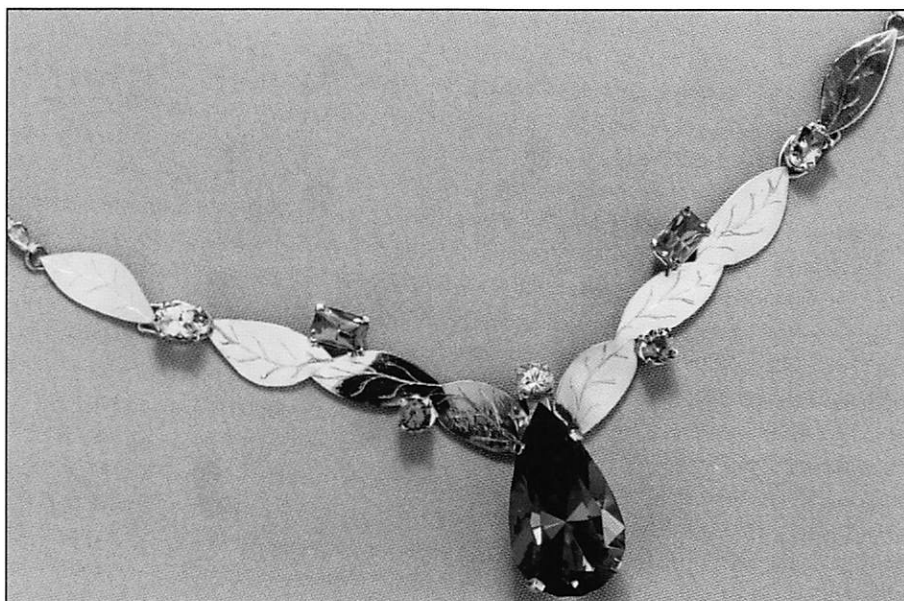
During his high school years, he was a very active volunteer for the Society assisting with special events.

His hobbies include movies, travel, and politics.

DIARY OF WILLIAM S. HASTINGS

(continued from the last issue)

1936--January 1, +40 [degrees] Happy New Year. Cloudy and not so cold. Dropped a stone on my left toe. Laid up all day. Jan. 2. Cloudy and warmer. Toe is sore but have worked on lights in Coburn place. Installed a heater in Bob's car. Jan. 3. Raining. Killed shote [young weaned pig less than a year old] Went to Auburn and Norway. Road was full of water. At one place in Auburn it was a foot deep. Jan. 4. Clearing and warm. Chored around. Fixed switches. Jan. 5. Snowing. Maybe 2 inches. Cleared in p.m. Not very cold. Stayed home. Filed saw. Wrote letters, etc. Tried to sight my .22 Savage with .22 long cartridge. All over the lot. Tried .22 Long rifle and it shot fine. Jan. 6. Cleared off the pond to saw ice. Warm. Hauled wood. Grange installation in eve. Jan. 7. Cooler. Sawed ice all day. Filled Farwell's house and ours nearly full. Meeting of Fish and Game Ass'n at West Paris Rifle Range. Also had a shoot. Jan. 8. Cool and clear. Sawed ice. Filled Chas. Reed's house and John's. Jan. 9. Cool and clouding up. Went in woods. Hurt my back in p.m. Farm Bureau Planning Meeting in eve. Snowing hard. Jan. 10. Warm and clearing. Snowed about 15-16 inches. Plows went thru about 10 a.m. Went to Norway in p.m. Only 7-8 inches down there. Jan. 11. Warm. Dressed poultry, etc. Back is bad. Jan. 12. Warm. Norway--had bones snapped back in place. Bethel--took Ma Cole to Dr. Tib. Bob, John, Rodney [Howe], Grove. [Brooks], Dana [Brooks, son of Grover] went ice fishing on Molnichwoc Pond [Mollidgewock Pond in Upton, .04 sq. mi.]. Got alot of pickerel. Jan. 13. Cooler. Filed circular saw. Built a snowscoot. Snowed in p.m. about 2 inches. Windy



More Than A Beautiful Necklace...

Designed and hand-crafted by Jim Mann of Mountain Mann Jewelers "on behalf of the keeping of history, the importance of history and the importance of fund raising," this beautiful Western Maine heritage piece with gold leaves (representing our forest heritage) supports a breathtaking pear-cut amethyst of 12.5 karats. Jim is known for his amethysts and chose to donate this precious piece that he has saved from his early years of mining while a student at Gould Academy and the place where he developed his "love affair with rocks."

The matching green tourmalines came from Mt. Mica, the first place in North America to yield this gemstone. The famous Newry lode discovery of '72-'74 gave us a pair of pink tourmalines. The striking aquamarines came from the Songo/Kimball Mine. The morganite atop the amethyst is from North America's largest piece, "The Rose," mined in Buckfield.

As a necklace, it is a delight to wear with any outfit from jeans to ball dress to office attire. In terms of investment, it is valued at \$5000 retail. It also exemplifies the colorful wealth of the natural resources of Maine's Oxford County and the generosity of the Society's membership.

As a fund-raiser, a limited number (only 500) raffle tickets are available at \$20 each. The drawing will be on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2000. This necklace would be treasured by any mother, wife, daughter, fiancée, daughter-in-law, granddaughter, niece, or friend. A number of people have already purchased tickets as gifts as well as for themselves. (Mr. Mann plans earrings that complement.) Those wishing to take advantage of this unique opportunity can purchase ticket(s) by completing and returning the form below or by calling the Society at (800) 824-2910 or (207) 824-2908.

.....
Bethel Historical Society, P.O. Box 12, Bethel, ME 04217

Yes, I would like to purchase _____ raffle tickets @ \$20 each for the HERITAGE NECKLACE.

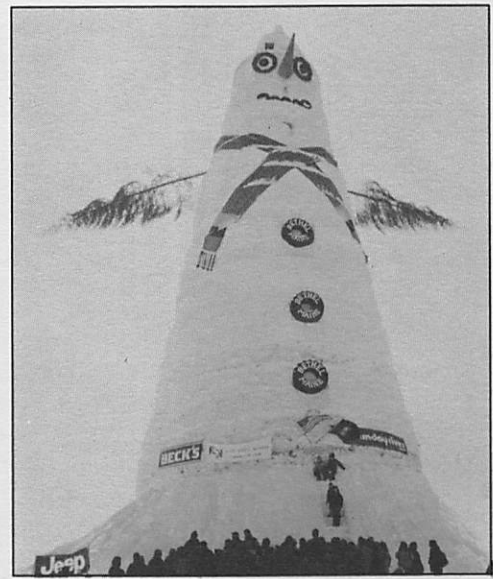
Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Total Enclosed _____

at night. Jan. 14. Windy. Wind tore a storm window from the kitchen window and threw it into the path. Luckily didn't break it. Put up spuds. \$1.60 cwt in Portland. Jan. 15, +5. Cold and clear in a.m. Chored around all day. Back is improving, I guess. Raining at night. Jan. 16, +34. Clearing and windy. Rained all night and hard. Brooks are up. Bob and Florence in Portland. Built over a door, etc. Terrible wind. Worst we have had in years. Blew in big window over my bench. Didn't break it, tho. Jan. 17, -5. Cold and clear. Hauled hardwood logs to a yard in pasture all day. Jan. 18, -4, Cold and snowing. Rolled yard in morning. Put up spuds. Went to Bethel. Roads are awful slippery. I registered as a Republican. Rudyard Kipling died today. Jan. 19. Cloudy and cold. Went to Greenwood. Started snowing again after dinner. Regular blizzard from Nor' east. Snowed all night and blew as it came (8" on level). Jan. 20. Clearing. Cold and windy. Drifting badly. Worst storm of the season. Built a potato sorter in a.m. Put up potatoes in p.m. Load for Johnson @ \$1.55 per cwt. King George of England died tonight. Jan. 21. Cold and clear. Hauled wood and logs. Have a new front sight for my .22 rifle, 17a Lyman, also swivels and sling. Supper and movies by Archie Grover at L. Mills by Game Ass'n. Jan. 22. Clouding up. Cold. Hauling logs. Jan. 23. Snowed in night. Clearing and windy. Butchered a steer for home meat. Put up rest of spuds in my cellar. Cleaned up the cellar. Shifted my rear sight back to rear of receiver of .22 Savage. Jan. 24. Cold and windy. Snow is flying. Went to Auburn and Norway. Road are good but slippery. Saw Ben Burrowes. My back has been in line for two weeks. Jan. 25. Cold in morning but warmed up by noon. Butchered hog for Bryant. 158 lbs. and came to \$22+. Sighted my rifle. Jan. 26. Cold and clear. Warmer in midday. Clouding up. Went up to Greenwood and Bethel. Greenleaf called in eve to see sick cow. She has mastitis. Jan. 27. Cold and snowing. Laid around all day. My back is out again. Jan. 28. Clearing, cold, and windy. Wind increasing and snow is drifting. About 2 p.m. I started for Norway. Air was full of snow and it was drifting into road pretty bad. Had to burn headlights at times. Back about 5 p.m. Wind a gale and blew all night. Worst I ever heard. Jan. 29. Mighty cold and wind still blows some. Laid around most all day. Butchered hog in p.m. Jan. 30. Cold! clear. Cuts the face off you this morning. Warmer at noon. Worked around here in p.m. Sure is one humdinger of a cold spell. -34 or -36 [degrees] reported in places. Jan. 31. Clear and cold. Bob loaded up potatoes and went to Portland. We went into the woods and hauled wood. I stayed and limbed out two trees. Back is bad. Bones out again. Feb. 1. Clear and windy. John and Edith snapped my back into place. I've laid around all day. Clifford, Cynthia and son arrived today. Feb. 2. Clear all day and windy. This is a heck of a Ground Hog Day! Have rested and relaxed!! Terrible wind all night. Sick about 2 a.m. Feb. 3, 0/15. Clear and warmer. Didn't get up until about 9 a.m. Liver spell, I guess. Went into woods for a load of cord wood. Sawed wood and put a cord of green wood in each cellar. Hard winter on fuel. I'll bet I use 10 cords of furnace wood this winter. Feb. 4, +15. Cloudy and snowing nearly all day. Hauled wood and logs in a.m. Put up spuds in p.m. Evening--Fish and Game Ass'n meeting in W. Paris. Shoot on range. Gave out the prize books. Feb. 5, +20. Clear and warmer. Bob in Portland. Potatoes \$1.55 per cwt. at Johnsons. We put up spuds in a.m. Cut and hauled logs in p.m. Back is fairly good. Feb. 6. Clear and cold, windy. I laid around most of day. Back is bad. Feb. 7. Cold and clouding up. Hauling logs. Snow is 3 ft. deep on level in open growth. Went to Norway in p.m. for treatment. Roads icy in



Bethel's "Angus, King of the Mountain" made history and the record books early in 1999 as the world's tallest snowman, standing over 113 feet.

places. Gave out prize books. Feb. 8, -10. Clear and windy. Bob's folks and our kids have gone to Carnival at Rumford. [A woman ski jumper was advertised widely.] Feb. 9, 0 deg. Clouding up to storm. Went to Greenwood. Snowed all day, about 6-7 inches. Feb. 10, -8, Clear and cool. Bob in Portland. Shoveled snow in a.m. Windy in p.m. Feb. 11, -8 deg. Clear and windy. Hauled logs in a.m. Wood in p.m. Drifting alot. Cold! Feb. 12, -5 deg. Clear and windy. Filed saws. Hauled limb wood (2 loads) and 1 load of logs. James Swan died tonight. Jan. 13, +1 deg. Clear and warmer. Hauling cordwood and logs. This has been a long cold spell. In Saskatoon there have been 56 consecutive days that the thermometer didn't go above -20 deg. Feb. 14, +10. Snowing, 3 or 4 in. Took car to Connors to have valve job. One valve burned bad. Feb. 15, +15/+5. Clearing and warm. First day the snow melted since Jan. 16. Bethel. Teeth filled and cleaned. \$11 worth. Jim Swan buried today. Jan. 16, -3. Clear and cold. Clouding up and mist at night. Greenwood. Bethel to pay excise tax. Feb. 17, +34. Raining a little. Mild and wet. Cased up stairway in Coburn Place. Started building nests. Feb. 18, +34/8. Stormy. Rain and snow. Wind at night. Cleaned henhouses. Shoveled snow from roof of brooders. Built hen nests in p.m. Feb. 19, -4/-14. Wind is howling. Hauled wood all day. Feb. 20, -22 deg. Cold and clear. Bob in Portland. Spuds \$1.55 per cwt at Johnsons. Put up spuds. Started hatching eggs. Feb. 21, -14, Cold and clear. Chored around in a.m. Norway in p.m. My back is coming good. Feb. 22, -7. Cold and clear. Windy. Chores. Bob's folks in Bowdoinham. Sick at night. Feb. 23. Cold and clear. Windy. Today has been hell with the lid off. Sick all day with a liver spell. Went to Greenwood and Bethel. Roads are fine. Feb. 24. Clouding up. Did chores. Slowly recovering. Strong south wind. Snow at night. Texas dust covered it so the snow was quite dirty. Whist party here. Feb. 25, +28. Warm and wet. Put up spuds. Went to Norway and had my back adjusted. Rain at night. Feb. 26, +36. Warm and clear until noon, then clouding up and south wind. Snow is melting. Setting up brooder in cellar. Chix are due tomorrow. Feb. 27, +34. Rainy. Went to the train and got 313 Cross Bred Chix. Brooder in my cellar. Chix came from Melville Wilson, Cumberland,

(continued on page 8)

Ctr., Me. 13 cents each straight or 8 cents per male. We have 250 straight and fifty males. Bob has a new Ford V8 car. Feb. 28. Warm and cloudy. Shoveled off roof of house and knocked off ice. Bob in Norway. Went to Bethel. Feb. 29. Nice Day. Went to Norway and saw Swett. Bob in Portland. March 1. Nice day. Warm and sunny. Laying around house. March 2. -14 deg. Frosty and clear. Warming up slow. Town meeting. I did not go. Set up incubators and warmed 'em up. March 3. Snowing lightly. Set one incubator with 400 eggs. Put up 100 bu. of spuds. Snowed all day. March 4. Warm and clearing. 4 or 5 in. of snow which nearly all melted. Set another incubator with 249 eggs. Hauled logs in p.m. March 5. Warm. Bethel. Did banking for Grange [he was treasurer of Alder River Grange # 145]. Bob in Portland. Started to build a wood-burning brooder stove. Fish and Game meeting at W. Paris. I won once. Center shot. March 6. +5. Clear and cool. Colder at night. Hauled hemlock logs in a.m. Norway in p.m. My back is getting better. Roads are lousy. Farm Bureau Whist Part at Guys [Bartlett]. I didn't go. March 7. -10. Warming up. Nice day. Went to Bethel. Bought set of reloading tools for my .38 Special from [H. I.] Bean [dealer in guns and ammunition on Spring Street, Bethel] for \$7. They were Albert Bowker's tools. In nice shape. March 8. Nice day. Greenwood and Bethel. Roads rough in spots. March 9. Snowing about 3 inches. Worked up tow more incubators. Worked on brooder stove. March 10. Cloudy and foggy. Bob hauling logs to Abbott's Mills. I've cleaned out chix. Team shoot at W. Paris. I led my team with 47 out of 50. March 11. Cloudy. Bob gone to Abbott's Mills. Sold some potatoes to Mr. Colby of So. Paris. Raining at night. March 12. Raining! And how! Cellar is flooded. Chix in water 3/4 inch deep! Poured all last night and all day today. We dug ditches in the rain. Wet thru. Ice went out of Androscoggin. Bear River Bridge pier taken out. Worst flood since 1927. Set two incubators 243 and 241 eggs. March 13. Warm. Water is over whole of interval. 2 feet in our tool shed on Home Piece. Big ice jam on Island and above. Ice all over Horse Pasture. Went down in canoe. Floods on all rivers in New England. It washed out three of the five spans of Richmond Bridge (cost \$300,000). 750 ft long section of M.C.R.R. Bridge at Brunswick washed away with 7 RR cars loaded with rock. March 14. Water down in night. Colder. Bob in Auburn on P.C.A. I went to Bethel. Roads have been flooded in many places. Charles Barker died this morning. March 15. Nice day. Stayed home. I cast some bullets for my .38 Special. Cleaned out chix. March 16. Warm and foggy. Put up spuds. Grange meeting in eve. Debate on Juvenile Grange. Miss [Ellen] Jolikko [teacher at East Bethel School] and I won by affirm. March 17. Foggy. The snow is all wet clear to the ground. Ice jam on the river and Horse Pasture. Coming down with the Grippe, I guess. March 18. Warm and rainy. I stayed in all day. Another flood is starting. Rained all day. Snow is going fast. Poured all night. March 19. Warm and raining. River is very high. Almost into potato cellar and rising fast at 8:30 a.m. We built a dyke of gravel and bailed all day. At 4:30 p.m. the peak passed with the river over 2 ft. higher than the cellar bottom. River level with the road shoulder between Coburn House and Bob's house. Unheard of pitch--fully 5 or 6 feet above 1927. We bailed all night and at 4:30 a.m. the drain from the cellar ran out instead of in. Some night! 2 hrs. sleep. March 20. Clearing and warm. Flood going down. Conditions desperate at Rumford and Lewiston. Went over Intervale in canoe. Water came to finish under



Certificates for the 1999 Bethel Historical Society Historic Preservation Award were presented to Charles Fillebrown representing Elmvale Cemetery in Waterford for preserving its historic gates, William White of the Bethel Inn for its sensitive rendering of its new wing, and Roderick Royer representing Carl Glidden, who transformed the Naimy Block on Main Street.

eaves of tool house but it is still there. Papers delivered at Bethel by plane. Set up brooder stove in South house. March 21. Raining again. River rose several feet over the road at Alder River Sat. night. We went to Bethel in p.m. Roads washed quite badly. Snow is nearly all gone. When I was at Lockes Mills a plane came over just clearing the tree tops in the fog following the railroad, going like a bull. March 22. Clear and windy. Water is falling fast. Put 311 chix in brooder house. They act sort of sick. Giving them a milk flush.

(to be continued in the next issue)

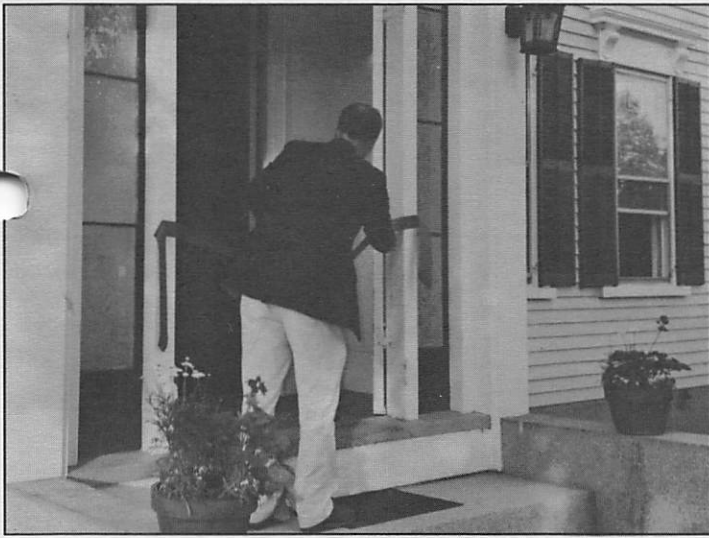
(Robinson House, continued from page 5)

lor (suggesting that the same builders worked on both houses), would have been far too elegant for a kitchen. Since we know that the original kitchen chimney in the Robinson House stood opposite, a few feet inside the present wall with the curved corner, it seems obvious that the surviving Robinson mantle was originally located in one of the more formal front rooms and was relocated here when the house received its Victorian embellishments.

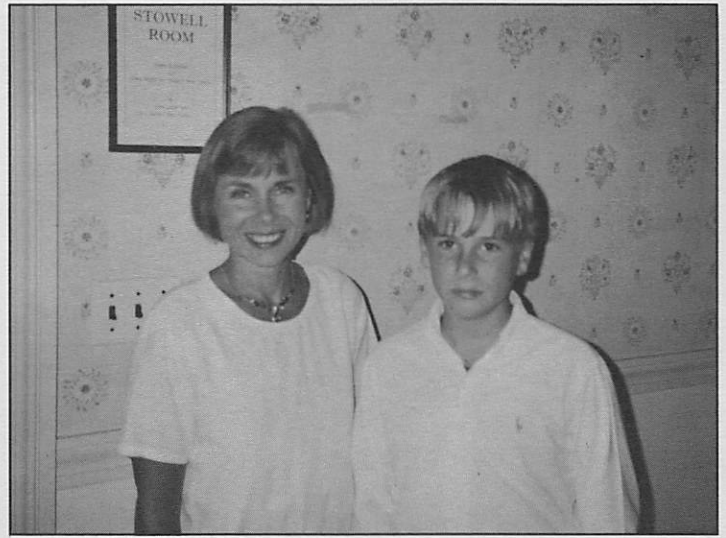
In May 1835, fourteen years after the Robinson House and store were built, O'Neil Robinson sold them and moved his family to Portland, and subsequently to Waterford. The property's new owner was Robert A. Chapman, in his day the wealthiest man in Bethel and for nearly half a century one of its leading businessmen and real estate speculators. Of Chapman's purchase, Dr. William B. Lapham, in his History of Bethel, recorded, "His ambition was, as I have heard him say, to own that store and do business therein in his own name." As a young man, Chapman had worked for Robinson, so he possessed a keen interest in acquiring his employer's Broad Street store.

During their occupancy of the Robinson House, at least up until Robert Chapman's death in 1880, the Chapman family carried out a number of changes here. Although no photographs of the property before August 1881 have yet

(continued on page 10)



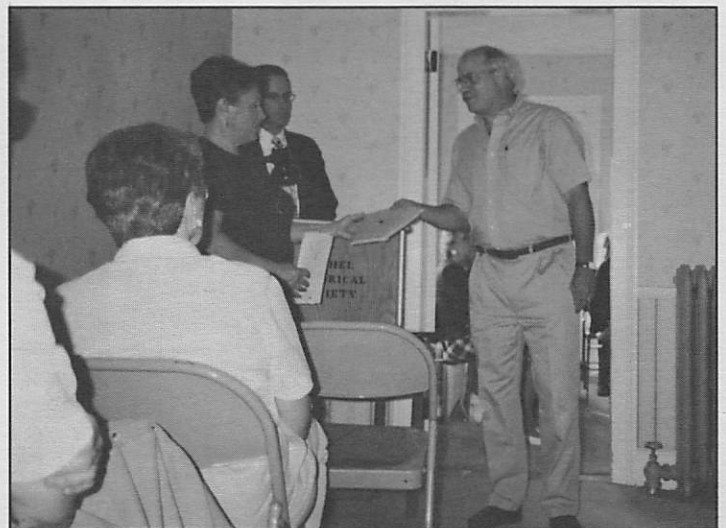
Chairman of the Board of Trustees Charles Raymond cuts the official ribbon to open the Robinson House to the public at the festivities on 3 June 1999.



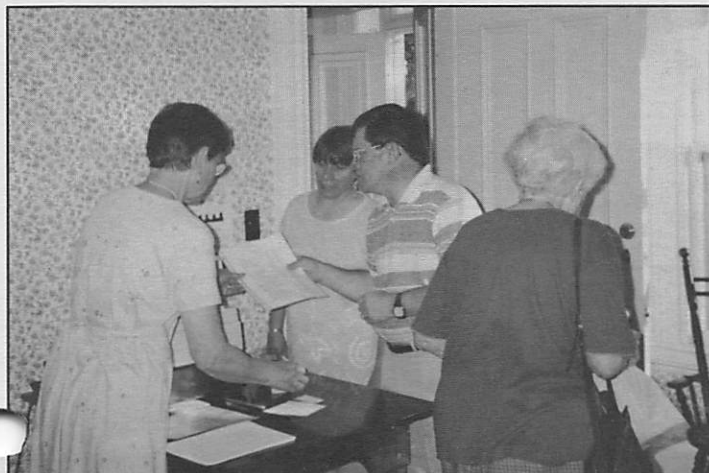
Betsey Raymond, wife of the Board Chairman Charles Raymond, poses with her son Andrew, wearing the Maine gem necklace, presented to the Society by James Mann.



Anita Remington (left), manager of the Bethel branch of Northeast Bank, presents a check for \$5000 to Susan Herlihy, co-chair of the Capital Campaign. This was the second installment in Northeast Bank's \$25,000 pledge. Looking on in front of the new Robinson House sign is Jaqueline Van Leuven, a member of the Capital Campaign Committee.



James Mann of Mountain Mann Jewelers presents the necklace he crafted containing Maine gems to Susan Herlihy of the Capital Campaign. The necklace with a value of \$5000 is to be raffled to benefit the capital campaign.



Trustee Priscella Walker, Museum Shop Manager, confers with Al and Jackie Cressy on the price of a item in the newly expanded shop.



Society Vice president Al Barth, trustee Arlan Jodrey on the tractor, and Building Committee member Dean Walker were part of the crew who cleared the overgrown brush on the north side of Robinson House this spring.

surfaced, a drawing of the house and its connected barn does appear in the 1878 bird's-eye-view of Bethel Hill Village. From this small sketch, it is clear that the Chapmans had by this time altered the chimney arrangement in the front of the house, eliminating the fireplaces on the back walls and constructing narrower chimneys up against the hall walls. Like most of his Broad Street neighbors, Robert Chapman had obviously switched to cast-iron stoves for heating and cooking, probably by the 1840s.

The former Robinson store, on the Bethel Library site, does not appear on the 1878 bird's-eye-view, and we now know why. According to an article in the *Oxford Democrat*, on 29 September 1864, Robert Chapman's store was destroyed by fire that started in a shed at the rear of the building. "Through the exertions of the citizens," recorded the paper, "nearly the whole of the goods in the store were removed. There was stored in the building about \$5000 worth of wool belonging either to ...H. J. Libby & [Company] or the Robinson Manufacturing [Company]. On the second floor was stored a part of the type of the Bethel Courier office, and some grain. The store was a substantial building and its loss makes an ugly gap." No photograph of the Robinson-Chapman store has yet been found, but its location is noted on the Bethel Hill Village section of the 1858 Oxford County Wall Map, which is reproduced in the exhibit.

The year 1881 is significant in Bethel history, for it marks the centenary of the famous "Last Indian Raid in New England." But that same year also holds special significance in the history of the Robinson House for that was when the Federal style house was swallowed up by the present building, which can be classed as "High Victorian Italianate." Soon after Robert Chapman's death in April 1880, his daughter Sarah, the wife of local lawyer Enoch Foster, gained ownership when her siblings and widowed mother relinquished any interest in the property. The Fosters, who had been residing on lower Main Street, immediately began their plans for updating this house, and work was well underway by February 1881.

Although Enoch and Sarah Foster may have hired an architect for this major rebuilding, it seems more likely that they were influenced by a number of recently built houses in Bethel, including the 1879 Samuel Philbrook House, now "Philbrook Place," on lower Main Street, for the details on that building, particularly the large roof brackets, are very similar to those on this building. In any case, the Fosters' ambitious scheme for the Robinson House completely transformed it into one of Bethel's largest and most stylish residences by the summer of 1881.

To provide more floor space, and especially for several large walk-in closets on two floors, the Fosters erected a new back wall to the front portion of the house, six feet out from the old one. In the center of the house, a section of this new wall curved away gracefully towards the front hall, an interesting feature that has fortunately survived. A fine entry porch with two sets of double doors replaced the old fan doorway and elaborate hoods with flat brackets were added to the tops of many windows. However, like other frugal Yankees, the Fosters saw no reason to spend money where it was not needed, so they reused some of the original Federal style window frames where they would be less visible, including the two on the first floor next to the fire escape. Other major changes made at this time included the construction of a higher roof and large

attic space, the addition of a second story on the ell between the house and barn, and the building of a side porch about one third of its present length of seventy four feet. The original side entry, which still leads into a hall behind the "Dutch door," was retained by the Fosters, but a triangular pediment on this end of the porch was built to give it a richer look. On the inside, further changes took place. New chimneys with fireplaces were constructed on the gable ends of the front portion, and heavy door and window moldings were added to the first floor rooms and both levels of the entry hall. The increased depth of the front hall now allowed for a much grander Italianate style staircase, which took the place of the Federal style stairs, examples of which can be seen in the nearby Mason and Hastings houses.

Once the old Robinson House had been enlarged and remodeled, the Fosters turned their attention to the grounds surrounding it. As old photographs show, a heavy wooden Italianate fence with large balusters encircled the property by the summer of 1881. When one keeps in mind that this elaborate fence ran along half the distance of the stone wall next door and then north on Broad Street, beyond the Library, to a property line at the brick block, one can only imagine the effect. The Fosters also purchased a stylish hitching post of polished granite, which they installed at the entry to their driveway. This post, with its large iron ring, now stands (thanks to the work of volunteers Arlan Jodrey and Avery Angevine) on the front lawn very near where it was originally placed.

Speaking of the Library, in December 1881, the *Oxford Democrat* reported the following: "There was an old-fashioned hauling of a building [on the 13th]. Honorable Enoch Foster's law office [was dragged] from near the depot to his lot fronting the Common. There were thirty yoke of heavy oxen, and the goad sticks and the air of importance shown by the driver was equal to that shown fifty years ago." This small building, which still exists as the rear stack section of the Library, had been built in 1870. It continued to be used by Enoch Foster until he moved his law practice to Portland in 1898. The following year, the Library Association began renting the building at a rate of \$50 per year, and in 1923 acquired the building and the land on which it stands through a bequest made by Agnes Straw, who had resided here.

In 1903 Sarah W. Foster, then of Portland, sold this property, which included the house, attached barn, and the nearby law office, to William O. and Agnes (Hastings) Straw, both of whom were closely related to O'Neal Robinson's wife, Betsey Hilton Straw. Although the Straws, who were cousins, had no children, their large Broad Street home served as a place where friends and relatives frequently visited. Mrs. Straw, especially, liked to entertain, and it was probably her idea to add the glassed-in porch on the Library side around 1905. Most likely around the same time, the old center room wall facing the Moses Mason House was pushed out and a bank of tall windows installed, resulting in a room that was sunnier but that now needed an interior post to support the weight of the second floor wall. William Straw died in 1909 and between that time and Mrs. Straw's death in 1923, few, if any, alterations were made to the property.

Under Agnes Straw's will, her nephew, William Straw Hastings and his wife Ruth, parents of Society member Barbara Hastings Honkala, inherited the house, but because they had just completed a new home in East

(continued on page 12)



Avery Angevine of the Building Committee moves the 1881 hitching post to its permanent location on the front lawn of the Robinson House. Working with him was Trustee Arlan Jodrey, chair of the Building Committee.

1999 ANNUAL FUND DRIVE

The 1999 Annual Fund Committee has had some changes since last year. Margaret Joy Tibbetts, who chaired the Committee for a number of years, has retired. Longtime member John B. Head has been selected as her successor. Another veteran member of the Committee E. Louise Lincoln died earlier this year and has been replaced by Danna Nickerson. Ms. Tibbetts' place on the committee has been taken by Dorothy Bartlett. Two other veteran members of the Committee, Barbara D. Brown and Alden T. Kennett, will remain. Much appreciation is due Ms. Tibbetts and Mrs. Lincoln for their years of service on the Committee.

Annual Fund income helps the Society balance its budget each year by supporting operations and maintenance. Those wishing to make a gift to this fund are urged to send it to the Society at P.O. Box 12, Bethel, ME 04217-0012.

EDITOR'S CORNER

This year marks my twenty fifth year as executive director of the Society. It certainly has been an interesting and challenging experience, being here to see the Society go from less than fifty members in 1974 to more than 1100 today. The Dr. Moses Mason House had little more than the furniture in the apartment when I came to the helm that day in May. Now it has become necessary to provide for more space for collections and operations. This spring the director's office was moved to the Robinson House where I have a splendid view of the other two houses of the "three Straw sisters" (Agnes and Abigail) while working in "Betsey Straw Robinson's house" as well as lots more space to work on all the projects facing the Society. How things have changed from those early days!

Change is everywhere at the Society with the establishment of the new museum shop in the Robinson House along with the movement of offices for the book-keeper and the office secretary. Exhibit rooms are being developed and plans for the building proposed. The Regional History Center is now established and programming for the future is in the early planning stage. Suggestions are always welcome and readers are urged to share their vision as to how all this should unfold.

Even *The Courier* is not going to be left behind in the sweep of change that is everywhere in the air here at the Society. In keeping with the organization's expanded mission, it has been decided to drop "Bethel" from the masthead and simply call our quarterly *The Courier*, which is what most people call it anyway and what we think will reflect new realities. Other changes are also planned for *The Courier* in future issues and we will be looking to our readers to tell us how they like them.

SRH

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Angus Andrews, Westlake Village, CA
Cheryl Kelso, Wayland, MA
Schuyler and Winifred Mott, Paris, ME
Barry and Marie York, Burnt Hills, NY

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2. special discounts in the museum store
3. preferred rate for meeting room rental
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5. quarterly publication, *The Bethel Courier*
6. reduced course fees
7. voting rights in the Society
8. special invitations to Society events

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(Robinson House, continued from page 10)

Bethel, they decided to sell the former Straw home, while retaining many of its contents. As a result of this decision, the era of this house being used as a private residence came to an end when on November 23, 1923, William Bingham II and William J. Upson, both of Bethel and co-partners in business under the firm name of "The Bethel Inn," purchased the property, exactly ten years after the main Inn opened for business.

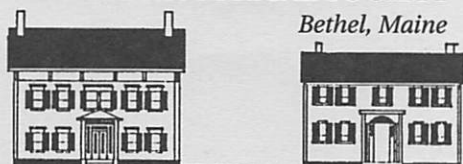
Advertisements and Inn brochures from the 1920s indicate that the Robinson House was at first given the name "Bethel Inn Annex," but this was eventually changed to "The Elms." During the 1920s and 1930s the Inn carried out a series of renovations to the house, ranging from the addition of many bathrooms (one of which has the round window facing the Library), a complete sprinkler system, and Colonial Revival wallpaper, to the demolition of the Robinson House barn and the lengthening of the side porch to its present size of nearly 74 feet. Regarding the barn, the *Bethel Citizen* reported that it was taken down in November 1931. Soon thereafter, the Inn erected in its place a two-story extension to the rear ell containing five more guestrooms. Fortunately for those of us interested in the early history of the house, the Inn reused many of the huge framing members and wide boards from the barn. Consequently, if one enters the storage room above the back stairs, one sees an entire section of the barn wall with timbers pegged together just as they were in the 1820s when O'Neil and Betsey Robinson made their home here.

And now, in 1999, this old house is entering yet another phase in its history, one that is sure to reveal our deep respect for the past as the future is contemplated by responsible members of the Society and others. Certainly, the careful preservation of this building's most unique architectural features, while carrying out necessary renovations, promises to be one of the most interesting challenges the Bethel Historical Society has yet faced. I, for one, look forward to the challenge.

SPONSORS NEEDED!

The 2nd annual New Year's Bethel will be held on December 31, sponsored by the Society. There will be a lighted vehicle parade, community bonfire, music, dance, storytelling, a variety of food, plus fireworks at midnight. Sponsors are needed for the entertainment, posters, and button for admission. Please call (207) 824-2908 or (800) 824-2910 if you can help make the arrival of 2000 a truly memorable time.

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Printing Company ~ Mead Paper Division ~ Moore
Recycling Associates ~ Mountain Mann Jewelers ~
Northeast Bank FSB ~ Norway Savings Bank ~ NTL
Institute ~ Oxford Telecom ~ Pat's Pizza ~ The River
Restaurant & Pub ~ River View Resort ~ The Inn at the
Rostay ~ Smith & Town Printers ~ Sunday River Brewing
Company ~ Sunday River Inn & Cross Country Center ~
Sunday River Ski Resort ~ S. Timberlake Co. ~ Union
Water Power Co. ~ The Village Sampler ~ Western Maine
Supply ~ Douglass & Robin Zinchuk & Family